



**NEW ZEALAND
WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY
SYSTEM STRATEGY - SUMMARY
2023-2033**

For more information, visit www.nzrugby.co.nz/womenandgirls



INTRODUCING THE WOMEN AND GIRLS SYSTEM STRATEGY

Women's rugby is on an exciting journey. 2022 encapsulated the unique flavour and excitement of the women's game, culminating with an amazing Rugby World Cup victory by the Black Ferns. That result provides a great foundation to launch a plan for enhancing the experience for women and girls in rugby for the next decade.

Women & girls have been involved in rugby since its inception, with the first women's game being played in the 1880s. The game has always been blessed with passionate players, coaches, referees, administrators and supporters of women and girls in rugby. In 2022, there were 24,447 women and girls registered and playing rugby in New Zealand and thousands of women volunteering in rugby across the country.

This system strategy provides the direction and priorities to drive rugby forward to genuinely be engaging of women and girls across all aspects of the game. It aims to harness the strength and value of women and girls that has contributed to the rugby system, and is an integral part of our future. It also acknowledges the value and contribution of our male allies that champion women and girls' rugby.

This system strategy is the result of 1,547 hours of passionate input from 2,221 stakeholders across New Zealand's rugby landscape. There are many organisations who are part of what makes up our rugby system, from the national body New Zealand Rugby, New Zealand Māori Rugby Board, Pasifika Advisory Group, Super Rugby Clubs, Provincial Unions, to clubs, marae, schools and other community organisations now and into the future.



Dame Patsy Reddy
New Zealand Rugby Chair



NZR is very grateful for the significant stakeholder input that informed and shaped this work. Thank you to everyone across rugby throughout Aotearoa who generously gave their time and perspectives to inform this strategy. There are already positive initiatives underway across the country to engage women and girls in rugby.

Engaging more women and girls in rugby is a change process. It will take time, focused effort, and a genuine desire by people – men and women – and organisations to operate and behave differently over time.

We look forward to seeing how clubs, Provincial Unions, rugby communities and NZR turn this framework into actionable change for the betterment of women and girls now and into the future.

**Ko te pae tawhiti, whāia kia tata
Ko te pae tata, whakamaua kia tīna
Seek out distant horizons and cherish
those (horizons) you attain.**



Dame Farah Palmer
New Zealand Māori Rugby Board Chair

OUR VISION:

RUGBY IS A GAME FOR ALL

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY IN 2022

Super Rugby Aupiki
Two female head coaches
+ an additional four females in the coaching set ups

3% female Chairs
across rugby Boards

5.7% of referees
are female

40%
average annual retention of female players

87.5% of female players under 18

compared to **68%** of male players under 18

24% female Board members
across the rugby system

Females involved in the game score rugby enjoyment 8.6/10

Average of around
24,000 females playing annually across the last five years

"I think if NZR is genuinely wanting to co-design and craft a contemporary and courageous woman and girls' strategy, then I'm all for that. It needs direction, purpose, and bravery to focus on a few key things that will fuel a part of the nation's game where the fires have already been lit by girls and women participants themselves.

The women involved in high performance rugby are incredibly thoughtful about their place in the game and their role in encouraging its growth in all areas: junior, school, community/club, and elite level. Listen to them and weave their ideas into the NZR strategy for the future."

Consultation participant, 2022

WHAT IS THE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY SYSTEM STRATEGY?

This strategy is a set of **guiding principles, key focus areas** and **prioritised building blocks** to deliver successful and sustainable engagement of women and girls (W&G). It is strongly aligned with the goals sought within the NZR 2025 Strategy and the pou outlined in the Māori Rugby Board Strategy, and contains measurable outcomes specific to women and girls.

This 10-year system strategy sets a shared direction and a series of outcomes as we work to engage more women and girls (W&G) across the rugby system. It encompasses females playing the game, as well as coaching, officiating, managing, governing, leading, or being involved in rugby in whatever way they choose.

The strategy acknowledges and respects that rugby stakeholders across the system are starting from different points, have different resources, and different populations to consider. To be most successful, it will require both women and male champions from right across the system to work together to achieve change.

Guiding Principles

These provide the core reasons or behaviours that underpin thinking across the W&G system strategy. They can be treated like a decision-making guide to enable success along the change journey.

1. Underpinning and surrounding all that we do is the protection and integration of Te Ao Māori, a genuine 'Waka Hourua' partnering approach with New Zealand Māori Rugby Board, and the enabling of culturally inclusive women & girls in rugby journey and environments.
2. Strategic choices and priorities made across the rugby system should always build towards the desired outcomes to engage more women & girls in rugby (rather than choosing ad hoc or short-term initiatives).
3. Take a 'rugby for all' view.
4. Take a women & girls' participant-centred, needs-based view.
5. Be informed by women & girls voices, data, and insights.
6. Always consider safety and wellbeing of women & girls.

7. Consider holistic outcomes (e.g. participant experience, performance, pathways, marketing & brand, fan engagement, culture, wellbeing, enablers etc).
8. Use a collaborative approach to work together across the rugby system with flexibility to make things happen for women & girls.
9. Be open to "change, innovate, fail fast and try again".
10. Use a "listening for understanding" approach, with an emphasis on open communication.
11. Invest in what is needed most for women & girls, consider interdependencies, and be accountable for delivering on investment.
12. Focus on continuous learning and fact-based evaluation and adaptation.
13. Align to the nationally shared direction, priorities and outcomes, but implement through regionally-led solutions that meet differing women & girls' needs and populations across regions.

Five Integrated Focus Areas

The five strategy Focus Areas are interlinked and reliant on each other to drive sustainable outcomes success.

A	CULTURE
B	SYSTEM
C	PARTICIPATION
D	PERFORMANCE
E	TRANSITIONS

Series of Prioritised Building Blocks




Each building block has a priority from 1-3. Although sequential, in practice the priorities do not need to be linear and the timing of each will change depending on the starting point of the organisations within the system, what they choose to prioritise, and the timing of investment into these initiatives.

WOMEN & GIRLS IN RUGBY SYSTEM STRATEGY

PERFORMANCE NGĀ HUA

TE UPOKO - THE HEAD

Balanced and sustainable performance outcomes for Women & Girls rugby

-  Mahinganui - high performance
-  Kaitautoko - fan
-  Tauhokohoko - commercial

TRANSITIONS NGĀ WHANAKETANGA

TE TAURA - THE CORD

Women & Girls entry and retention in rugby through safe, supportive and confident transitions

CULTURE AHUREA WHUTUPŌRO

TE AHO - THE TIE

Open-minded and inclusive culture across rugby

PARTICIPATION WHAI WĀHITANGA

TE HUKAHUKA - THE TASSELS

Women & girls participation growth and pathways fostered through innovation and flexibility

SYSTEM PŪNAHA WHUTUPŌRO

TE KAPUTA - THE STOPPER

Focused rugby system, investment, roles, resourcing and accountability

ENVIRONMENT TAHUATANGA

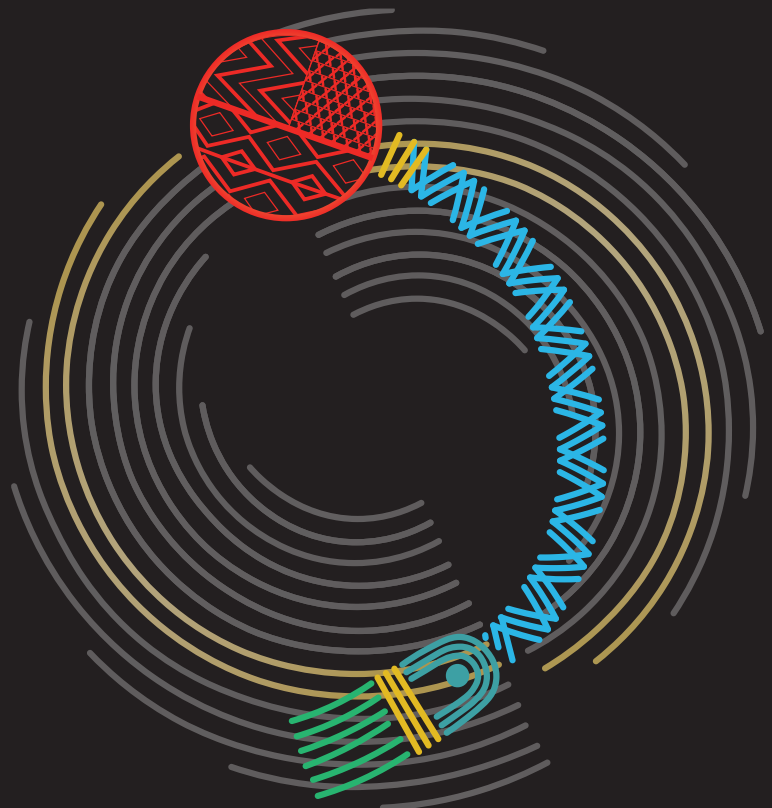
Rugby fans, people volunteering in rugby, rugby participants, rugby supporters, people working in rugby

Te Poi Tāniko

He tino taonga nō mai rā anō, nō ngā tipuna heke iho. It is a treasure handed down from our ancestors.

Te Poi Tāniko are a precious Māori taonga (treasure) from Aotearoa, an ancient practice handed down through the generations. Poi can mean the physical objects used by performers, the choreography itself or the accompanying music.

This Strategy, and its Focus Areas, takes inspiration from poi. We have combined various elements of poi, including the physical structure, the motion of poi and the metaphor of poi as a connector of communities past, present and future.



CULTURE | AHUREA WHUTUPŌRO

An open-minded and inclusive culture across rugby | Ko te wairua mākohakoha, tāpiripiri hoki hei ahurea mō te whutupōro.

Outcomes

These are the outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the Culture focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

- **At least 40% women in governance across rugby organisations** (i.e. NZR, NZMRB, Super, PU, Clubs)
- 40% women in leadership across the rugby system (including rugby community and HP roles)
- Rugby branded as **'a game for all'** (with a measurable shift in public and rugby system perception)
- W&G data and insights are consistently available to inform the rugby system and support quality decision making
- **100% of rugby organisations obtain and use W&G data & insights to inform their decision-making**
- NZR and 100% of PUs (and other organisations across the rugby system) have women & girls advisory groups so female voices are at the centre of decision making for W&G rugby
- **100% of PUs meet minimum member safeguarding requirements**



These successful outcomes will be delivered through prioritised building blocks:

Culture Priority 1

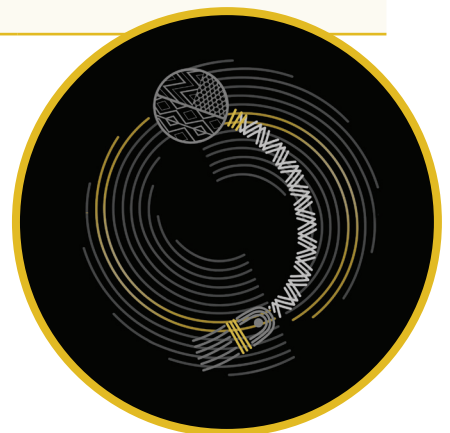
- A1.1 Share **W&G data & information** across the rugby system.
- A1.2 Enforce **baseline member protection** standards to keep W&G safe in all rugby environments.
- A1.3 Use quotas throughout the rugby system to drive significant increase in numbers and inclusion of **diverse women in governance**.
- A1.4 Support **male champions** to advocate and enable improved engagement of W&G.
- A1.5 Enable **unconscious bias** training to raise awareness and shift mindsets.
- A1.6 Establish **W&G advisory groups** so W&G have a collaborative voice in guiding female-centric rugby outcomes at all levels.
- A1.7 Support development and pathways for **diverse female leaders** across rugby.

Culture Priority 2

- A2.1 Collaborate on a shift and alignment of **W&G branding** that engages and connects W&G in rugby.
- A2.2 Use **storytelling** to raise visibility around diverse W&G journeys in rugby.
- A2.3 Facilitate **governance training and resources** that lift the quality of rugby governance.
- A2.4 Source and share data and insights on the **needs of future/potential W&G** participants.
- A2.5 Understand and enhance the positive impacts of **Māori and Pacific Peoples' cultural practices** on inclusion and engagement of W&G in rugby.

Culture Priority 3

- A3.1 Improve **training and support for Chairs** to better facilitate diverse Boards and Committees.
- A3.2 Address negative **sideline behaviour** and drive positive and inclusive attitudes and behaviours towards W&G throughout rugby environments.
- A3.3 Enable new **systems and technology** to source and share women and girls' voices, data and insights.



SYSTEM | PŪNAHA WHUTUPŌRO

Focused rugby system collaboration, investment, roles, resourcing and accountability | Ka aronuitia ngā pūnaha whutupōro ki te mahi ngātahi, te pūtea penapena, ngā tūranga, ngā rauemi me te haepapatanga.

Outcomes

These are the outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the System focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

- **Evidence of rugby system partnership, investment and resourcing delivering positive W&G outcome shifts year on year**
- There is clear ownership and accountability for W&G, from community to professional, across the rugby system
- **100% of organisations are consistently meeting minimum standards for W&G community rugby across the system**
- All regions have visible and well-delivered W&G community rugby
- PUs are funded and delivering W&G outcomes in line with mutually agreed key performance indicators
- Rugby consistently attracts high quality candidates and is seen as a great place to build a career
- W&G rugby is self-funding and financially sustainable for NZR and PUs



These successful outcomes will be delivered through prioritised building blocks:

System Priority 1

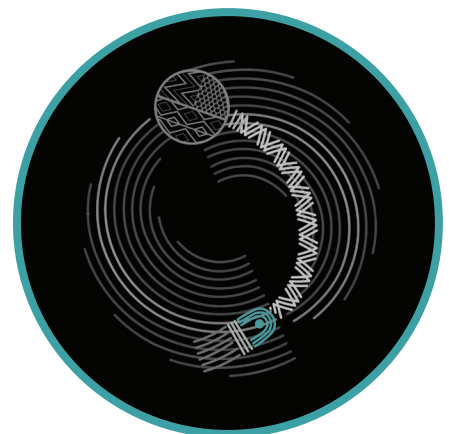
- B1.1 Demonstrate **intentional leadership** of W&G rugby nationally and regionally.
- B1.2 Redefine **rugby system relationships, roles, and responsibilities** for W&G.
- B1.3 Collaboratively **market W&G Community Rugby** opportunities.
- B1.4 Identify **W&G local community rugby needs** and minimum standards (i.e. Club Review).

System Priority 2

- B2.1 Implement **minimum requirements for W&G** community rugby.
- B2.2 Enhance **rugby system partnering, investment & accountability** for mutually beneficial W&G outcomes.
- B2.3 Implement a **risk reward approach** to motivate delivery against W&G targets.
- B2.4 Upskill and **empower community rugby people** to deliver inclusive and engaging community rugby.
- B2.5 **Review progress** against W&G strategy and implementation outcomes and **update priorities and targets**.

System Priority 3

- B3.1 Enable **community rugby through technology** resources and support.
- B3.2 Attract, recruit, retain and develop **high quality women** into roles across the rugby system.
- B3.3 **Review progress** against W&G strategy and implementation outcomes and **update priorities and targets**.



PARTICIPATION | WHAI WĀHITANGA

Women and Girls participation growth and pathways fostered through innovation and flexibility | Mā te tirohanga auaha, ngāwari anō hoki e whakatītina ai ngā huarahi whai wāhitanga mō ngā wāhine / kōtiro.

Outcomes

These are the suggested outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the Participation focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

- PU, junior clubs, schools, the Māori rugby system and other community partners are effectively collaborating in each region to deliver quality rugby experiences for all W&G
- Rugby formats meet the needs of current and future players
- **Measurable year-on-year increase in girls-only offerings at all stages along the pathway**
- **Measurable year-on-year increase in participant satisfaction with quality of W&G rugby experiences**
- Clarity of "what my rugby looks like" at every age/stage for every player in every region (the player pathways)
- **W&G player numbers are growing year-on-year at an average rate of 2,500 players/year (to 50,000 at 2033)**



These successful outcomes will be delivered through prioritised building blocks:

Participation Priority 1

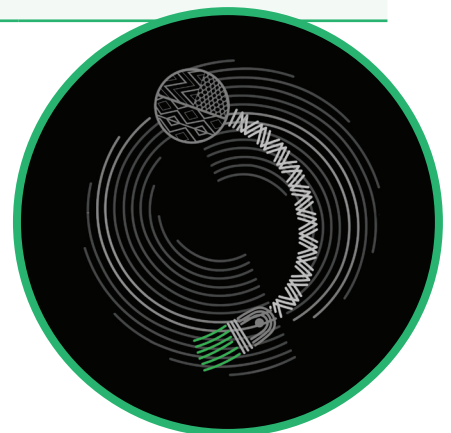
- C1.1 Shift to **PU-led W&G community rugby model** with roles & responsibilities between regional and local delivery partners collaboratively agreed to drive quality experiences and increased participation for W&G in each region.
- C1.2 Deliver athlete skill-build and injury prevention programmes for **safe and confident entry or transition into tackle rugby** for 11-18+ year olds.
- C1.3 Increase **girls-only non-contact offerings (e.g. Rip)** for 11-12 year olds that fit player numbers.
- C1.4 Increase **mixed or girls-only tackle offerings for 11-12 year olds** that consider adolescence factors and fit player numbers.
- C1.5 Increase **girls-only non-contact offerings (i.e. Rip)** for 13-15 year olds to lengthen non-contact pathway and provide entry option for new players.

Participation Priority 2

- C2.1 Increase **girls-only tackle offerings for 13-18 year olds** using formats (e.g. 7s, 10s, 15s) appropriate to player numbers and to building pathways, consolidated delivery as needed for safe quality experiences, and scheduling to avoid other sport clashes.
- C2.2 Increase **age-based girls-only festivals or have-a-go days for 11-15 year olds** to connect and engage girls in rugby.
- C2.3 Increase **girls-only festivals or camps for 15-18+ year olds** to connect and engage females of different cultures and/or capabilities to support retention and pathway transitions.
- C2.4 Investigate **regional or local partnerships with other sports** to grow and enhance W&G rugby participation in innovative ways.

Participation Priority 3

- C3.1 Extend the **non-contact offerings pathway (i.e. Rip)** for 16-18 year olds using girls-only and/or mixed for a quality experience that supports retention.
- C3.2 Increase **skills-based girls-only tournaments or festivals** to enhance tackle pathway and talent identification opportunities (7s, 10s, 15s).
- C3.3 Increase **girls-only non-contact offerings (e.g. Rippa)** for Under 10 year olds to provide an alternative to mixed Rippa teams and/or competitions to fit player numbers.
- C3.4 Retain and grow **adult female numbers** and provide quality W&G rugby experiences that support sustainable senior club participation.



PERFORMANCE | NGĀ HUA

Balanced and sustainable performance outcomes for women & girls rugby – high performance, fan and commercial | Kia tika, kia toitū ngā hua mō te whutupōro wāhine / kōtiro - e hāngai ana tēnei whaingā ki ngā kaitākaro, ngā kaitautoko me te umanga.

Outcomes

These are the suggested outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the Performance focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

- **Sustained and improving performance results by Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens are attracting measurable increases in fans and growth of commercial investment**
- Black Ferns teams have a well-established stand-alone sponsorship family delivering local and global opportunities
- Black Ferns 15s and Black Ferns Sevens consistently winning pinnacle events
- **Athlete wellbeing ratings meeting targets established in HP plans (as identified initially in the 2023 HP plan)**
- Measurable growth in crowd attendance at regional competitions (e.g. FPC and Super Rugby Aupiki)
- Measurable growth in viewer numbers of regional competitions (e.g. FPC and Super Rugby Aupiki)
- **Measurable growth and retention of quality W&G performance coaches and referees**
- Measurable year-on-year growth and depth in the talent pool for Black Ferns and Black Ferns Sevens selection



These successful outcomes will be delivered through prioritised building blocks:

Performance Priority 1

- D1.1 Review and develop a planned approach to **W&G competitions, performance and high performance pathways** (e.g. Women's HP Plan).
- D1.2 Review and develop a planned approach to **W&G talent identification, development and support** for players, coaches, referees, and managers (e.g. Women's Talent ID Plan).
- D1.3 Redefine the **Performance and HP delivery partners** relationships, roles, and responsibilities for W&G.
- D1.4 Source and share **W&G commercial insights**.
- D1.5 Source and share **W&G fan engagement & brand insights**.

Performance Priority 2

- D2.1 Implement seamless **pathway connections and transitions from community to performance** (e.g. Women's HP & Talent ID Plan implementation).
- D2.2 Collaboratively drive **cross-regional performance opportunities** to foster female performance aspirations (e.g. Heartland, FPC).
- D2.3 Review and instigate a shift to optimise the **balance of W&G outcomes across high performance, fan and commercial** needs.

Performance Priority 3

- D3.1 Implement more **strategically balanced W&G competitions**, and performance and high performance pathways (i.e. HP, commercial and fan).
- D3.2 Further develop **W&G high performance opportunities and environments** to enhance W&G ability to win with mana.
- D3.3 Optimise the **W&G playing calendar**.



TRANSITIONS | NGĀ WHANAKETANGA

W&G entry and retention in rugby through safe, supported and confident transitions | Whanake ai ngā wāhine / kōtiro i te urunga tuatahitanga ki te whutupōro, i raro i te mahau haumarū, tautoko, māia anō hoki.

Outcomes

These are the suggested outcomes to measure progress and/or achievement in the Transitions focus area. Those in bold print are the key long-term outcomes for 2033.

- **Increase in average annual W&G player retention from 40% to 55%**
- W&G Transition coaching, refereeing and rugby delivery training resources in place and 80% coaches, referees and managers supporting or delivering W&G rugby have completed W&G Transition training
- 100% rugby organisations across the system have at least two people with identified W&G delivery competencies
- Shift from 9.3% to 20% female coaches across the coaching pathway
- Shift from 82 referees to 330 female referees across the refereeing pathway
- Shift from 65% to 80% of W&G participants who feel their health, welfare and wellbeing is “fairly or very well supported” in rugby
- **Reduction in the percentage of ACC injuries for W&G rugby long-term**



These successful outcomes will be delivered through prioritised building blocks:

Transitions Priority 1

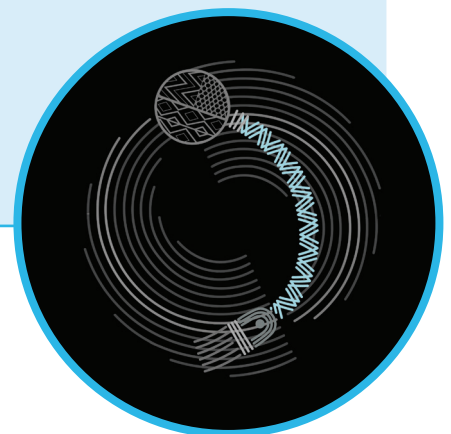
- E1.1 Source and facilitate training on the key **differences around coaching and managing W&G** (i.e. hauora, psychosocial, physiological, cultural).
- E1.2 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on skill coaching to support **safe and confident W&G transitions into tackle rugby** (i.e. starting into tackle rugby or transitioning from non-contact into tackle).
- E1.3 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on the **philosophy and practice of girls-only offerings and flexible hybrid delivery** for successful W&G community rugby participation growth
- E1.4 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on how to run high quality **inclusive rugby experiences for diverse W&G** (i.e. safety, environment, culture, training).
- E1.5 Collaboratively develop and deliver training on effective and safe practices **for coaching a diverse W&G team mix** (i.e. spread of age, capability, experience).

Transitions Priority 2

- E2.1 Develop and deliver officials training on the **art of refereeing women and girls**, and rules and safety for refereeing W&G mixed capability and age games.
- E2.2 Collaboratively develop and deliver advanced coach training to support the **W&G talent transition from community rugby** to performance rugby.
- E2.3 Develop and deliver advanced coach training on **skill-specific offerings for W&G** (e.g. technical, tactical and physiological coaching requirements for female front rowers).

Transitions Priority 3

- E3.1 Collaboratively develop and deliver coach training for supporting **W&G transition from non-contact (i.e. Rip) into 7s rugby**.
- E3.2 Develop **W&G rules and refereeing practices** to best facilitate and support safe participation and performance by W&G in rugby.
- E3.3 Develop and support **W&G talented coach & referees** to transition from community to performance and high performance.



CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to all those who shared their time and insights to inform and guide the authors in the development of this system strategy - a multitude of stakeholders from across the rugby system, within rugby delivery organisations and beyond, and a range of stakeholders from communities across New Zealand.



Bay of Plenty



Buller



Canterbury



Counties Manukau



East Coast



Hawke's Bay



Horowhenua-Kapiti



King Country



Manawatu



Mid Canterbury



North Harbour



NORTH OTAGO

North Otago



Northland



Otago



Poverty Bay



South Canterbury



Southland



Taranaki



Tasman



Thames Valley



Waikato



Wairarapa Bush



Wellington



West Coast



Wanganui



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